

# Meth Treatment Unit Targets Youth and Success

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Daryl Hall,

Director of Adult and Juvenile Programs, Indiana DOC.

Ice, glass, rock, speed, tweak -- no matter what they are called, methamphetamines are increasingly tied to growing incarceration rates in corrections facilities across the nation, especially among juveniles. To stop this trend, the Indiana Department of Correction realized that a new program was needed to target meth use where it starts.

“We saw a need for earlier prevention methods. Approximately 80 percent of our juvenile population has substance abuse issues that they’ve reported to us,” says Daryl Hall, Director of Adult and Juvenile Programs for the Indiana DOC. “Looking at the success that we’ve had in targeting substance abuse in our adult population, methamphetamine abuse in particular, we branched out - and our next logical step was to help the juvenile population.”

With this in mind, the Indiana DOC recently opened the first juvenile methamphetamine treatment unit in the country. The unit, which holds approximately 40 youths during six-month treatment periods, is designed for juveniles who have used methamphetamines as well as those who might be susceptible to the drug.

“We’re clueing in on juveniles with a background in substance abuse as our primary criteria, but we’re also focusing on juveniles who are surrounded by people who abuse methamphetamines,” says Hall. “So we’re able to capture both populations.”

By stopping meth use among juveniles, Hall says the DOC hopes to circumvent a life of addiction which could otherwise plague the youths - and land them back in the prison system as adults.

## Structured Programs and Lives

One important aspect of the program is a structured schedule that specifically identifies educational needs and substance abuse issues - and also helps juveniles establish the ability to make better choices and solve problems in their lives. Designed in five stages, the unit runs in a controlled manner, filling up the days with programs and classes geared towards rehabilitation.

Hall says the unit was created with a blend of therapy, treatment and education in mind.

“This unit is very treatment sensitive,” Hall explains. “Their schedules are set up on an hour-by-hour basis. Every hour of the day, they are either in class, in treatment or in recreation.”

On a typical day in the meth treatment unit, juveniles are awakened up at 7 a.m. with a mandatory room inspection. Once their rooms are in order, they head to breakfast, which is followed by a day of intense treatment and education. In between classes, methamphetamine treatment and education programs help youths to understand why their rehabilitation is crucial to avoiding future addiction and incarceration. The classes and treatment programs focus heavily on drug education, and addressing the mental, emotional and social effects the drug can have on users.

“Basically, this unit has created days that are 14 to 15 hours long,” says Hall. “They spend their days in classes, and then in the evening they are usually scheduled to complete homework from treatment or education classes, or they have the option to attend Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings or religious services.”

During the evening meetings, the juveniles have an opportunity to talk to staff and each other about the events of their day. This allows juveniles to have some input into the success of the program and also keeps them up-to-date in what is happening at the facility.

“This is a rigorous schedule, but we set a goal to have juveniles through this program in six months - and we made sure that we were providing intense treatment during those six months,” Hall says.

## Breaking Traditions and Addictions

Aside from the six month timeline, the meth unit is also different from other treatment programs because of its staff.

“This unit is staffed very differently,” Hall says. “All of the staff that work in this unit are cross-trained to provide a variety of services - custody, supervision, group leadership, mentorship, counseling, and

even teaching.”

Through cross-training the staff have fostered open relationships between juveniles and those working in the unit. According to Hall, the unit staff also serve as role models for youths.

“Our staff model great behaviors and show these juveniles what they need to work on,” Hall says. “Our staff speaks with youths daily and holds them accountable for their behavior. And they also try to provide an opportunity for these juveniles to learn during every conversation.”

Role models are a crucial aspect of the meth unit, especially for those juveniles who might not have a positive role model in their lives prior to incarceration. Additionally, the unit has also left the door open for family members who may want to help in the rehabilitation process.

“We’ve found that if we involve the family in this rehabilitation, we have a support system for juveniles when they leave the program,” Hall explains. “It’s not always possible for every juvenile, but it really helps. Ideally, we train family members to help [the youth] continue their rehabilitation and hopefully avoid relapse.”

## Treatment and Beyond

Beyond the education, treatment and role modeling, the unit also reinforces the program’s focus through environment.

“I think this is a very different environment in a correctional setting. This unit looks different from other units in the facility,” Hall says. “There are posters and slogans posted to help them stop and think, and they serve as a reminder to these kids that they have a responsibility to themselves and the community to maintain sobriety and make the right choices.”

Hall adds that the unit was also developed at no additional cost to the Indiana DOC, which relocated staff and supplies in order to help fund the program. The staff has been overwhelmingly supportive of the program, and Hall says many youths appreciate the chance to change their behaviors.

“Our juveniles are very enthusiastic about the opportunities that this program may present for them,” Hall says. “Historically, we’ve always had a pretty strong drug program in this DOC, but we also have had a staff with a great attitude which made it easier to establish this program in a shorter period of time.”

Hall says that he is hopeful this unit distinguishes the Indiana DOC for its commitment and dedication to substance abuse treatment, education and therapy.

“This is a fairly new venture for us, but I think this is an effort in a positive direction,” Hall says. “We’re able to intervene at younger ages, and we’ll certainly be able to track that statistically in the future. If we

see the success that we anticipate, we will hopefully implement this throughout the state as a standardized program.”

## **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.